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SUBJECT: AUSTRIA HOSTS CONFERENCE ON MOLDOVA'S EUROPEAN  
OPTIONS

#### Summary

1. On June 22, the Austrian Foreign Ministry's Diplomatic Academy hosted a conference on "Moldova's European Options." Two Moldovan ministers, European political analysts, and diplomatic representatives discussed Moldova's relations with the EU and the Transnistrian conflict. Moldovan Foreign Minister Andrei Stratan reiterated the GoM's commitment to further European integration, but claimed the unresolved Transnistrian conflict remained the biggest impediment. Thomas Mayr-Harting, the Austrian MFA's Political Director, announced that Austria would emphasize internal security issues, such as border security and combating organized crime and human trafficking, during its EU Presidency the first half of 2006. Moldovan Reintegration Minister Vasile Sova argued for a reinvigorated format for the Transnistrian negotiations to include the USG and EU. End Summary.

#### Moldovan Foreign Minister's Perspective

2. During his presentation to the conference on June 22, Moldovan Foreign Minister Andrei Stratan underlined Moldova's unwavering commitment to a European course. Stratan noted that President Vladimir Voronin had reinforced this message during his June 7 meeting with EU Highrep Javier Solana and his June 8 address to the European Parliament. According to Stratan, there was a strong political consensus within Moldova to forge ahead with European integration. Stratan pointed to the unresolved Transnistrian conflict as the biggest impediment to Moldova's integration into European institutions. However, he added that improved bilateral relations with Romania and Ukraine had given new impetus to the Transnistrian settlement process. Stratan acknowledged that trafficking in people remained a major problem, but he noted the problem had two sides -- the source country and the destination country.

#### An Austrian Perspective

3. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Political Director in the Austrian MFA, noted that Austria had strong historical ties to Central, Southeastern and Eastern Europe. He said Austria would continue to strengthen relations with nations in the region, such as Moldova. Mayr-Harting emphasized that the GoA had recently designated Moldova as a priority country for development assistance in Eastern Europe. Mayr-Harting announced the GoA would highlight internal security issues during its EU Presidency in the first half of 2006. This would include enhanced border security, combating organized crime and measures to stem trafficking in persons. Mayr-Harting agreed with FM Stratan's observation that source and destination countries needed to collaborate closely in the fight against human trafficking.

#### The European Commission's Perspective

4. Judith Gebetsroithner, an Austrian diplomat seconded to External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner's office, rebutted criticism that it was unfair for the EU's European Neighborhood Policy to group European countries, such as Moldova and Ukraine, with North African countries. She said individual countries could determine the pace and intensity of contacts with the EU, including implementation of EU Action Plans. That said, she acknowledged that Moldova and Ukraine "are in a different category than Egypt or Morocco."

5. Gebetsroithner cautioned that the Transnistrian question was not the only issue Moldova needed to address in the context of European integration. She urged the GoM to fulfill conditions to resume an IMF program, which would send an unequivocal message that the GoM is committed to a free market economy. Gebetsroithner urged further progress on judicial reform and on freedom of the press. On Transnistria, Gebetsroithner said that Russian participation would be key to any settlement, and she urged the GoM to engage all parties in negotiations, and "not simply issue declarations in the Moldovan Parliament."

#### Moldovan Reintegration Minister on Transnistrian Conflict

16. Moldovan Reintegration Minister Vasile Sova characterized the current OSCE-led negotiating format on Transnistria as inefficient. Sova said that over the past 15 years, Moldovan negotiators had put forward various plans and approaches, but, unfortunately, the Transnistrian authorities were either not interested in moving toward a settlement, or were not "free" to do so. In this situation, the GoM had supported the formal inclusion of the USG and EU in the negotiating process to "create a better balance of powers."

17. Sova said the final resolution of the Transnistrian conflict included three key elements: demilitarization of the Transnistrian region; democratization of the separatist region; and the establishment of effective border monitoring along the Transnistrian segment of the Moldovan-Ukrainian border. Sova added that there were three components associated with the demilitarization of Transnistria. First, Russia must unconditionally fulfill its Istanbul commitments to withdraw its troops and armaments from Moldovan territory. Second, the current peacekeeping operation, based on a 1992 Moldovan-Russian agreement, was outmoded. An international, OSCE-mandated mission of military and civilian observers should replace the current peacekeeping operation. Finally, any Transnistrian settlement should ensure the demilitarization and disbandment of the "Transnistrian army."

18. According to Sova, effective control and monitoring of the Transnistrian segment of the Moldovan-Ukrainian border was essential to stop trafficking in persons, drugs, goods, and arms in the region. This trafficking had a deleterious effect on the Moldovan economy and it was a threat to regional stability. Sova noted that Moldovan President Voronin and Ukrainian President Yushchenko had jointly written to EC President Barroso and EU Highrep Solana requesting EU assistance in establishing international customs control and monitoring of the border.

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